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SUBJECT: Annual American Studies Conference
in Nigeria Focuses on Religion in American
Society.

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1. Summary: Highlighting "Religion in the US," American Studies specialists discussed religion and American society at the recent 8th Annual Conference of the American Studies Association of Nigeria (ASAN) held in Jos. Unlike previous seminars, this year's gathering was more effective because fewer papers were presented which allowed for in-depth discussions and exchange of ideas. The participation of Professor David Harrell, who teaches the history American religion at Auburn University, kept the deliberations on the theme of the conference on track. Professor Harrell's in-depth analysis of the dynamics of American religious life won the respect of both Christian and Muslim intellectuals who attended the conference. Harrell's presentation, "Awash in a Sea of Faith," provided a strong base for a stimulating discussion throughout the three-day seminar. This is a GPRA report. End Summary.

2. Description of Activity: A three-day conference of the American Studies Association of Nigeria (ASAN). The theme for the seminar was "Religion in the United States." Professor David Harrell, who teaches American religious history, served as the lead speaker during the conference. He was joined by other Nigerian American Studies specialists and commentators who delivered papers on various aspects of religion in the United States.

3. Dates: August 13 - 15, FY 2001, 4th Qtr

4. Justification/Objective: Since it was founded about 10 years ago, the American Studies Association of Nigeria (ASAN) has continued to demonstrate a genuine interest in promoting American Studies program in Nigerian universities. By focusing on religion in the US during this year's conference, ASAN wanted to stimulate a healthy and vibrant discussion with academics, religious intellectuals, influential politicians and journalists on an important issue that is worthy of study in Nigeria.

5. MPP Umbrella Themes/Audience Reached: NI-PD-07 (Strengthening Institutions that Bear on the Understanding of the US). Over 100 participants, representing the various ASAN chapters from 22 federal, state and private universities attended the seminar. Also in attendance were representatives of Christian and Muslim groups, journalists and students. The Deputy Governor of Plateau State and several high-level members of his cabinet attended the opening ceremony.

6. Result/Impact: Excellent. The association's decision to address religion in the United States at the conference was good. For the first time in recent years, Nigerian intellectuals were able to reflect on religious tolerance in the Nigerian

context in an environment devoid of any religious zeal.

17. Non-USG Funding: N/A.

18. Quality of US Support: Excellent. Post thanks ECA/A/E/USS for funding Professor David Harrell to attend the conference and for providing ASAN with a grant to host the program. The ASAN executive committee members and most participants pointed out that the participation of an American expert on religion was a good idea and contributed greatly in the success of the conference. Harrell's comments, especially his assertion that religion was hale and hearty in America, as opposed to its declining condition in Europe where government had sheltered it, were well received and generated lively debates at the conference.

19. Comment: The quality of discussion at the conference was excellent. Most of the papers presented were of high academic and professional standards. Given the diverse representation of scholars throughout Nigerian universities at the seminar, it is now clear that American Studies has not only become relevant but acceptable among faculty members and students in this important African country. The next seminar will take place in the Eastern City of Calabar in August 2002. Post again would like to solicit the support of ECA/A/E/USS in advance in funding the project and in recruiting a US keynote speaker to participate in the conference.
Andrews